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Slogan as a Corporate Mission Statement

The article is good example of my close ties with the English Department. It was originally published in *Studies in Honour of Janusz Arabski on the occasion of His 70th Birthday* [WYSOCKA M. (ed.): *On Language Structure, Acquisition and Teaching*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2009, 154—162]. Professor Janusz Arabski, whom I started to know as a student in the period 1975—1979, is the supervisor of my Ph.D. thesis written at the English Department.

The topic of the article is connected with my *habilitation* project. Its completion resulted in my employment in the Institute of English (2008—2012) together with the continuation of existing and making many new friendships with the staff members of all the English Department.

1. Introduction

Slogan is usually analysed as a genre of the language of advertising (BRALCZYK, 2004: 124—129; CRYSTAL, 2005: 180—181) or the language of political propaganda (BRALCZYK, 2004: 127). In fact it may be used “...to form a forceful, catchy, mind grabbing utterance which will rally people [...] to behave in a certain way [...]” (CRYSTAL, 2005: 180).

The main issue of this article is to analyse how a slogan may function as a corporate mission statement. In particular the analysis will concentrate on the occurrence in slogans of structural components prescribed by the theoretical assumptions of writing a mission and on how they are expressed.

2. Mission statement *versus* slogan

Space limitations make it impossible to present both the managerial and linguistic aspects of a mission statement. They are summarised in the research made by MAMET (2005) and here it may suffice to mention only the major issues such as the definition of the mission statement, its function and slogan as its generic form.

Nightingale defines mission statement as:

A statement of vision, or ambition that defines success and establishes the ground rules by which success will be achieved for a particular company of institution, the articulation of management's intent regarding the future of an organisation, expressed in aspirational terms (1993: 19).

GALBRAITH (1985) indicates that its emergence must be seen in the context of the development of the theory and practice of management shifted from compulsion to financial reward and then to identification. RUE and HOLLAND (1989: 67) point out in turn that it is not only the organisation but also its environment which are to be affected by the mission statement and its content. This means that a mission statement is a tool designed both to motivate people to work and to create a good image of a company.

Researchers seem to disagree considerably about the amount and character of components that a mission statement should contain e.g. CAMPBELL and YEUNG (1990: 2), DAVID (1990: 282), FALSEY (1989: 37), GRAHAM & HAVLICK (1993: 3), PEARCE (1990: 263—278; 1994: xi—xiii) and WIERNEK (1994: 62). This is well summarised by MAMET (2005: 26—29) who also suggests synthesis of different approaches and a list of six components of mission statements, i.e.:

- business profile and technology;
- purpose and vision;
- values, philosophy, strategies and company's self-concept;
- market and clients;
- employees;
- local community and other stakeholders (MAMET 2005: 39).

Taking into consideration the definitions presented above it seems that the core components of a mission statement are the purpose and vision together with the values, philosophy, strategies and self concept of a business. The remaining ones complement them by saying how the objectives and strategies are to be fulfilled.

There are many generic forms that mission statement may take. They are discussed in more detail by SWALES and ROGERS (1995: 223—242) and MAMET (2005). There is an agreement between the outcome of the linguistic research indicated above and research of mission statements from the managerial point of view that slogan is a one of the major generic forms of mission statements. The latter approach is represented by ANTOSZKIEWICZ and PAWLAK who claim that mission should be expressed as a credo contained in one short sentence that may also play the role of an advertising catchword, a saying, that may be used in different activities of a firm (2000: 50). Pluta maintains that slogan may reflect corporate mission and be used in advertising (2001: 54). This corresponds with the linguistic research made by SWALES and ROGERS who indicate that mission statement is often in the form

of a *catch-phrase*, motto or slogan (1995: 225). MAMET analyses slogan as a mission statement in a separate chapter of his research (2005: 218) and the following research is based on that analysis in a considerable way.

The analysis is based on a corpus 181 slogans. They are taken from FOSTER (1993) and HASCHAK (1998) and corporate web pages. The slogans quoted in the text appear in Appendix.

3. Components of mission in slogans

It must be quite a challenging task to squeeze all the six items in a slogan and it may be interesting to analyse whether and how a slogan-mission may contain all of them.

3.1. Business profile and technology

The generic limitations of a slogan make it necessary to present the business profile in a short and general way. Thus the slogan of Baldwin Technology Co. Inc. just places the firm in printing business *Where There's Printing, There's Baldwin*. Xerox Corp. presents itself as *The Document Company*. Polysemy may be a good tool to contain more data in a slogan, e.g. *Filtration. Separation. Solution* [Pall Corp.]. The word *solution* belongs to the register of chemical, technical vocabulary and thus it defines the technology and business profile. In its general meaning it has a persuasive character indicating that the company may solve problems. Business profile or technology may be found in 75 slogans (41.44%).

3.2. Purpose and vision

This component appears in 5 slogans (2.76%). The best examples are the slogans of SmithKline Beecham — *Striving to Make People's Lives Better* and Nova Care Inc. — *Helping Make Life a Little Better*. The use of the superlative form is a device taken from the language of advertising where it presupposes that the current state of affairs is to be improved (BRALCZYK, 2004: 92—95).

Vision may be easily combined with the business profile, e.g. Inc. *Filtration Solutions for a Cleaner World* [Donaldson Co.]. Sometimes a firm may assume that it is sufficient to communicate that it has a vision, e.g. *Vision for Industry* [Cognex Corp.].

3.3. Philosophy, *self concept* and strategies

This is probably the core component because having a mission involves some self concept. It may be said to appear in all slogans, however, there is a variety of philosophies and strategies that appear in slogans.

First of all companies try to indicate their efficiency in solving problems and achieving their goals, e.g. *Perfecting the Art. of Brewing* [Stroh Brewery Co.] or *Bringing Innovative Therapies to Neurology* [Cephalon Inc.]. Being people oriented is even more valuable than professional perfection as show in the slogan of Comerica Inc. *All Banks Understand Banking. We Also Understand People*. When defining the corporate self-concept, a metaphor may prove helpful e.g. *One Well Oiled Machine* [American Stores Co.] or the company name, e.g. *Our Name Is Our Way of Doing Business* [The Good Guys Inc.].

3.4. Market and clients

This component may be found in 40 slogans (22.1%). Big corporations operate on a global, or at least national scale, and missions statements, especially those in the form of a slogan, define strategic issues. This is why markets and clients are referred to in very general terms. Markets that appear in slogans — missions are represented by the lexeme *world* such as *World Leader in Electronic Security* [Sensormatic — Electronics Corp.] or — *World problems. World solutions. World class* [Imperial Chemical Industries]. The alternative lexeme is *global*, e.g. *Satisfying Our Global Customers with Source, Supply and Service*. [DiMon Inc.]

Some of the companies that do not operate on a global scale indicate their national markets, e.g. *America's Drive In* [Sonic Corp.] or point out a local target, e.g. *The heart of the north* [Northern Electric].

Particular groups of client appear very seldom in slogans. The exception to this rule is the slogan of Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd. — *The business person's favourite airline*. It is usually the lexeme *people* which indicates the firm's clients, e.g. *Where people matter* [The Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc].

3.5. Employees

Just like clients, employees seldom appear in slogan-missions (6 slogans — 3.31%) and if they do they are referred to as *people*. In some slogans it is indicated that people are connected with a particular firm, e.g. *We Are AMP People Working Together to Satisfy Our Customers* [AMP Inc.] or a particular branch, e.g. *The Beef People* [Winn-Dixie Stores Inc.]. Sometimes the qualifications of employees are mentioned,

e.g. *Unbeatable People Unmatched Presence* [Alaska Air Group Inc.] or *People Finding a Better Way* [Dana Corp.].

The noun *people* used to refer the employees is a good example of the rhetoric of identification. It erases the differences in position, education and status. The company apart from creating its good image also sets standards for all the employees by defining the qualities that the firm's people should represent.

3.6. Local community and stakeholders

The use of worlds like global, people, or world makes it unnecessary to include the last component in the slogan. If it appears at all it is just called by its name without any details, e.g. *We're Committed to Helping Our Communities Succeed* [First Bank System Inc.]. This component may be found in 2 slogans only (1.1%).

4. How many mission components can be squeezed into a slogan?

A slogan-mission must fulfil different and contradicting criteria. As a slogan it must be short and catchy but as a mission it should contain the theoretically prescribed components.

A short form may be limited to one component of a mission, this is usually the core component — the vision it sets out or the company philosophy together with its self concept, e.g. *Forever New Frontiers* [Boeing]. The corpus contains 79 slogans (43.65%) of this type.

Two components occur in 70 slogans (38.7%), e.g. *Providing medical transportation services to patients, customers and communities nationwide* [American Medical Response Inc.]. This may be summarised in the following way:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| business profile | <i>providing medical transportation services</i> |
| market and clients | <i>patients, customers and communities nationwide</i> |

There are 27 (14.92%) slogans in the corpus which contain three components in different configurations, e.g.

— self concept + stakeholders + purpose, e.g. *We're Committed to Helping Our Communities Succeed* [First Bank Systems Inc.]

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|
| self concept | <i>we're committed to helping</i> |
| stakeholders | <i>our communities</i> |
| purpose | <i>succeed</i> |

- philosophy + purpose + profile, e.g. *Passion, Commitment and Leadership in Healthcare* [Tenet]

| | |
|------------|----------------------------|
| philosophy | <i>passion, commitment</i> |
| purpose | <i>leadership</i> |
| profile | <i>in healthcare</i> |

Space limitations make it impossible to present all possible patterns of components but it seems that putting three components in a slogan is the pattern that provides for the requirement of brevity and the theoretically prescribed content of a slogan-mission.

5. Universal slogans

BRALCZYK notices that a slogan may contain a lot but there is no obligation to insert anything particular in it (2004: 126). This matches perfectly the observation made by Gail T. FAIRHURST that „...missions may possess” „...a strategic level of generality and ambiguity...” (1993: 336). The slogans analysed above are not very precise in terms of their content. Nevertheless they seem to be oriented at delivering some particular message about a company. This makes them different from slogans which, when taken away from a particular company’s website or brochure, could be used by any business. This may be said about such slogan as:

- *Building Insights. Breaking Boundaries* [Elsevier],
- *Connecting people* [Nokia],
- *We never forget who we are working for* [Lockheed Martin].

Slogans are very general but, in terms of mission components, it is sufficient if they contain one of the core components?, i.e. the purpose of a business or its self concept and thus function as a brief but enduring mission statement.

6. Conclusions

Mission statement is a linguistic message which has to fulfil a variety of, sometimes contradicting, criteria. It has to motivate people and to create a good image of a company. It has to be short and persuasive but it should contain a number of components prescribed by the theory and practice of management. Slogan seems to be a good solution. Although it is a short message it can contain as many as three or even four theoretically prescribed components. All slogans may be said to express the core component of a mission, i.e. the philosophy and self concept of a business. The level of generality suits the nature of a mission statement which is a document about concepts and strategies, not about details of actions or operational procedures to be taken. Slogan is a well known form used both in the language of advertising as well as poli-

tics. The present study gives clear evidence that this genre may also be successfully applied in such major fields as human resources management and public relations.

Appendix

List of slogans quoted in the text

| No. | Company | Slogan | Source |
|-----|----------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. | Alaska Air Group Inc. | Unbeatable People, Unmatched Presence | 1:16 |
| 2. | American Medical Response Inc. | Providing medical transportation services to patients, customers and communities nationwide | http://www.amr-inc.com (2004-05-07) |
| 3. | American Stores Co. | One Well-Oiled Machine | 1:30 |
| 4. | AMP Inc. | We Are AMP People Working Together to Satisfy Our Customers | 1:32 |
| 5. | Baldwin Technology Co. Inc. | Where There's Printing, There's Baldwin | 1:51 |
| 6. | Boeing | Forever New Frontiers | http://www.boeing.com/flash.html (2004-05-07) |
| 7. | Cephalon Inc. | Bringing Innovative Therapies to Neurology | 1:89 |
| 8. | Cognex Corp. | Vision for Industry | 1:105 |
| 9. | Comerica Inc. | All Banks Understand Banking. We Also Understand People | 1:107 |
| 10. | Dana Corp. | People Finding a Better Way | 1:127 |
| 11. | DiMon Inc. | Satisfying Our Global Customers with Source, Supply and Service | 1:132 |
| 12. | Donaldson Co. Inc. | Filtration Solutions for a Cleaner World | 1:133 |
| 13. | Elsevier | Building Insights. Breaking Boundaries | http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/homepage.cws_home/ (2008-03-06) |
| 14. | First Bank System Inc. | We're Committed to Helping Our Communities Succeed | 1:149 |
| 15. | (The) Good Guys Inc. | Our Name Is Our Way of Doing Business | 1:163 |
| 16. | Imperial Chemical Industries plc | World problems. World solutions. World class | 2:76 |

| | | | |
|-----|--|--|--|
| 17. | Lockheed Martin | We never forget who we are working for | http://www.lockheedmartin.com (2004-05-0) |
| 18. | Nokia | Connecting people | http://www.nokia.com/ (2008-02-29) |
| 19. | Northern Electric | The heart of the north | 2:95 |
| 20. | Northrop Grumman | Defining the Future | http://www.northgrum.com (2008-01-11) |
| 21. | Nova Care Inc. | Helping Make Life a Little Better | 1:234 |
| 22. | Nova Care Inc. | The People Carers | http://novacare.org.au (2008-01-12) |
| 23. | Pall Corp. | Filtration. Separation. Solution | 1:240 |
| 24. | Pilkington Glass Ltd | The world's leading glass company | 2:103 |
| 25. | (The) Royal Bank of Scotland Group plc | Where people matter | 2:109 |
| 26. | Sensormatic Electronics Corp. | World Leader in Electronic Security | 1:263 |
| 27. | SmithKline Beecham | Striving to Make People's Lives Better | 1:266 |
| 28. | Sonic Corp. | America's Drive In | 1:267 |
| 29. | Stroh Brewery Co. | Perfecting the Art of Brewing | 1:272 |
| 30. | Tenet | Passion, Commitment and Leadership in Healthcare | http://www.tenethealth.com (2004-05-07) |
| 31. | Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd | The business person's favourite airline | 2:129 |
| 32. | Winn-Dixie Stores Inc. | Getting better all the time | http://www.winn—dixie.com/ (2008-01-12) |
| 33. | Winn-Dixie Stores Inc. | The Beef People | 1:300 |
| 34. | Xerox Corp. | The Document Company | 1:304 |

Source: HASCHAK, P.G. (1998), *Corporate Statements. The Official Missions, Goals and Philosophies of Over 900 Companies*. Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland&Company, Inc. Publishers.

FOSTER, T.R.V. (1993), *101 Great Mission Statements. How the World's Leading Companies Run Their Businesses*. London: Kogan Page.

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Source

- MAMET, P. (2009): "Slogan as a corporate mission statement." In: WYSOCKA, M. (ed.) *On language Structure, Acquisition and Teaching*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 154—162.